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## Bird Life Study and Its Broadening Influences

When a young man, the writer camped, fished and hunted in the upper reaches of the Carmel River, Monterey County, California. Mountain and Valley Quail, Band-tailed Pigeons and Mourning Doves were well known, but only such thought was given to their habits, habitats or food preferences as assisted us in successfully hunting them. In the valley one recognized Blackbirds, Meadow Larks, and Robins, but not being game birds, little interest was taken in them.

Crows, hawks, (all species of hawks were merely hawks) and owls were considered harmful and shot at whenever within range of our gun. Turkey Vultures, though carrion eaters, were considered legitimate targets for gun and rifle practice. No notice was taken of warblers, vireos, or any other song birds with the exception of linnets and "canaries."

At our public schools botany was one of the prescribed studies, lessons were given and field trips taken to collect specimens for herbariums, but upon the subject of birds and bird life teachers were silent.

In 1913, when taking a trip through Yellowstone Park, I met Dr. and Mrs. Lewey. The doctor was a member of a Chicago Audubon Association and during the few days we spent together his keen interest in and knowledge of bird life aroused a wish on my part to know something more about our feathered friends.

Learning of a University of California extension course on birds and bird life, to be given by Dr. Harold C. Bryant, the writer enrolled as one of his students in the fall of 1917 and since then his field of study has gradually extended until it includes many phases of this fascinating subject.

A beginner for purposes of identification usually divides birds into color groups; as time passes it becomes obvious that some understanding of call notes and songs is essential, then their habits, habitats, manner of flight and food preferences must be considered. One associates certain species with certain trees, to-wit: the California Woodpecker, and the Plain Titmouse in the oaks; the Waxwing in the pepper or cherry trees, the Pine Siskin in the willows and alders during spring; the California Thrasher and the Bell Sparrow in the chaparral covered hillside, etc. One observes the fondness of the Black-headed Grosbeak and the Western Tanager for the toyon and cascara berry. Gradually one becomes interested in trees, plants and flowers.

The fact that the oaks are heavily laden with acorns; the toyon and the cascara bushes with thousands of berries, that millions of seeds are scattered far and wide, stimulates your mental faculties and you wonder if the Supreme Architect in His infinite wisdom, did not intend them to be used as food as well as for propagation purposes. Everywhere you find evidence of nature's bountiful provision.

Springs, creeks, creek beds, rivers, lakes and rainfall come into your expanding horizon and there follows in natural sequence an impulse to acquire information as to all phases of nature which influence the avian world. Some knowledge of altitudes and life zones is helpful and necessary. Migratory flight passes in review.

You observe seasonal variation in plumage, learn how nature endeavors to preserve by protective coloring. Consider the Ptarmigan, or Arctic Grouse, snow white in winter to mottled brown and white when the warmth of spring melts the snow and the brown colored rocks show here and there; the Texas Night Hawk so difficult to locate when nesting because of its protective coloring and many other similar examples will be recalled by students of bird life. Nature's purpose we know, but how it accomplishes this, we do not know.

Inevitably there comes consideration of the real value of avians, their place in the scheme of things. On the one side you place economics, on the other esthetics.

The checks and balances of nature are evident and when man attempts to alter them, the results are usually unsatisfactory. How necessary is a comprehensive study of fish and game management, forests, recreation and land use planning, and not less important is research by well trained men who are free from political influence. Would the Passenger Pigeon and the Heath Hen have been exterminated, would our forests have been destroyed, would erosion and dust bowls have brought untold misery if these subjects had been better understood?

Should not instruction be given in our schools about birds and bird life, so that the younger generation would grow into manhood and womanhood with some knowledge of their importance?

Joseph J. Webb, San Francisco, California. January 16, 1939.



### A Stranger in Strawberry Canyon

On July first a field trip up Strawberry Canyon was arranged for a few of the visiting ornithologists attending the American Ornithologists' Union meeting in Berkeley. While intently watching Warbling Vireos at their nest in a large maple some fifty yards west of the Botanical Garden, our attention was arrested by a song which the eastern visitors identified as that of a bunting. It certainly was not the regular song of the Lazuli Bunting, *Passerina amoena*.

The bird could be seen but was shaded by a maple leaf. Even in this position its colors did not appear like those of the Lazuli. In a few minutes it flew to a bare twig and to our surprise it appeared to be an Indigo Bunting, *Passerina cyanea*. Here it sang again. I say appeared to be an Indigo Bunting because without the specimen in hand a doubt will be raised by some as to the correctness of our identification.

We went to the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology and looked over the skins of Indigo and Lazuli Buntings and felt convinced that our bird was the former. Members of the museum staff returned to the location in the canyon with the hope of seeing the bird again and if possible collecting it in order to establish the correctness of our sight identification. Looking through literature we could find no previous record for California.

Junea W. Kelly, Alameda, California. July 12, 1939.



### Arizona Hooded Oriole in San Francisco

On the evening of July 6th, about 6:45 o'clock, at my home, 2736 Lyon Street, San Francisco, I was looking from a window into my yard which has a cherry and four plum trees, when I heard several notes which attracted immediate attention. In Hoffmann, these notes are described as a "chattering chek-chek-chek."

Within a moment or two a male Arizona Hooded Oriole, *Icterus cucullatus nelsoni*, alighted upon a telephone wire leading into my home, the wire being quite a distance below the window, thus giving an excellent opportunity to look down upon the bird. Observation through binoculars continued for a few moments, when the bird flew into the cherry tree where again he was very carefully

observed. From the cherry tree he returned to the wire, and then flew westerly into the Presidio in the direction of a cypress and some palm trees.

The nearest point from San Francisco that this bird has been observed by me is at Modesto. An interesting question arises—in as much as we have had the Anhinga, a semi-tropical bird with us for sometime, and now this oriole, which is generally found in warmer climates—is the climate in San Francisco changing or are these birds becoming accustomed to a cooler one?

Joseph J. Webb, San Francisco, California. July 20, 1939.



### Barn Owl Pellets

The following is a summary of the contents of Barn Owl pellets found at Lake Merced:

Year	1938	1938	1938	1939	Average
Month	March	April	April	May	Pctgs.
Total number of individuals:	138	373	592	623	-----
Percentages of total by species:					
Meadow Mouse	50.0	54.5	45.5	51.2	50.3
Pocket Gopher	8.7	13.1	20.1	25.2	16.8
White-footed Mouse	29.7	7.5	13.3	11.6	15.5
Harvest Mouse	3.6	4.9	5.2	6.1	4.9
Mole-shrew	—	2.1	1.8	1.9	1.4
Mole	3.6	1.9	3.8	1.4	2.7
House Mouse	1.4	1.1	.6	1.3	1.1
House Rat	1.4	.75	1.2	.3	.91
Brush Rabbit	.8	.25	.1	.3	.36
Birds	.8	13.9	8.4	.6	5.9

I believe the higher percentages of birds in the April lists were due to the presence of a Cooper Hawk who used the same spot for his dining room. At any rate the presence of 1619 animals who are nearly all destructive to man's interest is certainly an argument for the owls.

Gordon Bolander.



**The Gull:** The following back numbers of The Gull are wanted. If any of our members have extra copies, the Association will appreciate receiving them: 1920 September; 1931 July, September, October, November, December; 1932 January, February, March, April, July, August, September, October, November, December; 1933 September, October; 1934 January, February, March, and April.



### July Field Trip

On July 16th, a perfect day, nine members walked along the water's edge from Sea Cliff to the Cliff House, San Francisco, noting the following twenty-two species. After luncheon just inside Golden Gate Park the group dispersed, instead of continuing farther into the park as had been our custom in former years.

Sooty Shearwaters	Allen Hummingbird	English Sparrow
Brown Pelican	Red-shafted Flicker	Brewer Blackbird
Farallon Cormorant	Barn Swallow	House Finch
Brandt Cormorant	Barlow Chickadee	Green-backed Goldfinch
Western Gull	Wren-tit	San Francisco Towhee
California Gull	Western Robin	Nuttall Sparrow
Heermann Gull	Western Gnatcatcher	Song Sparrow
Pigeon Guillemot		

Members attending were Messrs. and Mesdames Dunshee, Stephens; Misses Berg, Blake, Cohen, Sterne, Mr. Myer and Jean.

### Audubon Notes

**August Meeting:** The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 3rd, at 8 p.m., in room 19, Ferry Building. Please note change in date.

The speaker will be Dr. Arthur A. Allen, Professor of Ornithology of Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y., whose subject will be "Hunting Birds with a Color Camera," illustrated with Kodachrome.

Members may bring guests.



**August Field Trip** will be taken on Sunday, the 13th, to Muir Woods, Marin County. Take the 8:15 Sausalito Ferry meeting on the upper rear deck, buy round-trip ticket to Mill Valley, 40 cents. Walk past the Old Mill, up Cascade Drive to Tenderfoot Trail, to California Alpine Club, and down the Ocean View Trail to Muir Woods, about a four mile walk. Bring luncheon.

Those who do not want to walk all the way may take jitneys at Mill Valley Station to Alpine Club (\$1.00 one to four passengers), and wait there for those walking.



**July Meeting:** The 263rd regular meeting was held on the 13th in room 19, Ferry Building, with twenty-three members and guests present. President Junea W. Kelly presided.

The following observations were reported:

Gordon Bolander: Lake Merced, Osprey, June 17.

Mrs. Kelly: Bay Farm Island, few Willets, Godwits and Dowitchers, two Bonaparte Gulls; San Mateo Bridge,

Willets, Godwits, few Dowitchers; Dumbarton Bridge, 500 Willets, June 28th; Pacific Grove, Heermann Gulls, July 1st; Moss Landing, Willets, Godwits, Dowitchers, 50 Northern Phalaropes, 4 Bonaparte Gulls, few Least Sandpipers, Stilts and Avocets, July 4th.

**Commander Parmenter:** From Thornton to Rockaway,  $15,000 \pm$  Shearwaters, June 27th; Lake Merced, Anhinga still present up to July 13th; Mountain View marshes, two adult Clapper Rail with five jet black downy young, July 11th. The mother was obtaining food along the muddy shore but before feeding she went to the water's edge and shook her bill with the food in it back and forth, then she fed them. A late date for downy young; Sears Point Road, 5 American Egrets, Duck Hawk, June 19th; El Granada, one Hudsonian Curlew, July 5th; Moss Landing: 50  $\pm$  Western Willets, 11 Long-billed Dowitchers, 5 Forster, 1 Common and 4 Least Terns, July 7th; San Mateo Bridge, 1 Avocet, 300  $\pm$  young California Gulls, 2 Common Terns, July 11th.

The speaker of the evening was Dr. W. E. Ritter, who took as his subject, "Bird Lovers and Bird Knowers," giving us interesting anecdotes on the naturalists John James Audubon, Robert Ridgway, John Burroughs and John Muir. He brought out the thought that it is impossible to be just a bird lover for one's interest in birds naturally leads to more knowledge as we are stimulated to study them. The birds alone cannot appeal to our emotional side; they must also awaken our intellectual faculties.

### Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President.....	Mrs. G. Earle Kelly.....	1311 Grand St., Alameda, Calif.
Corresponding Secretary.....	C. B. Lastreto.....	260 California St., San Francisco
Treasurer.....	Mrs. A. B. Stephens.....	1695 Filbert St., San Francisco

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 P. M., Room 19, Ferry Building.

Address Bulletin correspondence to Mrs. A. B. Stephens, Editor, 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco.

Membership dues, payable January 1st, \$3.00 per year.

Student memberships, \$1.50 per year.

Life memberships, \$50.00.

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.